

## KOSOVO<sup>1</sup> ON THE AGENDA AND ITS IMPACT ON MACEDONIA

**Mirjana Maleska**

Professor of Politics and Political Systems at the Southeast European University, Tetovo  
Senior Fellow Researcher at the Institute of Sociological and Political Research, Skopje

\* \* \*

All of us here knew quite well that the great majority of the Macedonians considered the 2001 Ohrid Agreement an unjust act, the product of violence on the side of the ethnic Albanians supported by the “international community” against the Macedonian national state and against the interests of the Macedonian nation.

Has anything changed since? Yes. The feeling of insult, humiliation and lost dignity is gradually giving way to understanding and, although so far still very rarely, even to an open acceptance. I have lived to see a Macedonian say that “consociational democracy is our future.”<sup>2</sup> What is equally important is this happened at an assembly of pro-governmental intellectuals and political activists.

Alas, “consociational democracy” is not a magic formula. It rests on the assumption that the political elites of the ethnic communities that are coming to terms in multi-ethnic states *want* to develop such a democratic model of the state. Speaking using political vocabulary, “the efforts towards building (this) new democratic strategy will be successful so long as the sides are truly committed to and abide by the consociational agreement”.

But, what if political elites do not have the will to do so? What if they are not “truly committed” to such an agreement?

Comparative research of a number of authors in similar military conflicts, as was ours, reveals that the “main obstacle towards the implementation of peace agreements following internal, violent conflicts lies more in the refusal by, than in the sincerity of the government to implement what has been agreed, and often in the incapability of the state institutions to do this in the proper way.”(F. De Varennes)

There are several reasons for this: mutual mistrust, only until yesterday, among warring sides in the conflict that are today coalition partners in government; pressure from radicalized public opinion that considers cooperation with former “terrorists” as “treason to the national cause”; fear that future elections will be lost due to the accepted compromise...

How, then, can this situation be overcome and greater social cohesion be built and on what foundations?

The answer is – permanent accommodation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note on terminology: In the Editorial and other articles written by non-Albanian authors, the spelling of the name “Kosovo” (rather than Kosova) is used as that is the spelling most commonly used in the English-speaking world. However, the spelling “Kosova” is used in the articles written by Albanian authors.

<sup>2</sup> Consociational democracy or Consensus Model of Democracy, according to Arend Lijphart in “Democracies”, Yale University Press

Accommodation of several ethnic communities in one state sounds painless only on academic paperwork and in discussions. In real life, as we can well see in Macedonia, this is a painful process: a hasty or wrong political action, such as the military and police action in Brest, brought the government to the edge of its falling apart. A hasty or wrong decision made by the Minister of Education of abruptly introducing Albanian classes into what was a Macedonian school disturbed the entire educational process.

This, unfortunately, is also part of the process of accommodation!

Difficult and painful as it is, such situations can teach us that neither of the sides can get anything at the expense of the other without all of us paying a high price for it. The unique way of preventing conflict is to build a democratic state in which all ethnic groups will not increase their own security, political and economic advantage at the expense of the security, political and economic interests of the other groups in the society. A precondition for this is mutual agreement.

This is quite a complicated balancing act even for far more mature democracies than is ours. The Ohrid Agreement installed a mechanism that can lead to a multi-ethnic balance and accommodation in the process of decision-making.

Consensus reaching mechanisms can lead to greater cohesion and integration, but they can also lead to disintegration, as examples from other similar conflicts throughout history demonstrate. What Horowitz, Lijphart, and other advocates of the 'consociational democracy' underline is the necessity of ***moderate political speech and attitude by all sides in the process, both government and opposition. Intellectuals, journalists and various educators of democracy also share in this great responsibility.***

The minority should not abuse its newly achieved right to veto, and the majority should not obstruct the process of democratic transformation.

But there is a lot of obstruction. We haven't yet seen local government functioning, and new demands for canonization and federalization are being made on all sides of the ethnic spectra! As if this were not enough, demands for the "right of self-determination" of Albanians are being voiced loudly. At this stage, all these are recipes for destabilization.

I would like, now, to say a few words about Kosovo and the reason why some articles in this issue of New Balkan Politics are devoted to Kosovo and its future status. "A happy neighbor is a good neighbor", wrote the NATO Ambassador in Macedonia, Mr. Biegman, with Kosovo in mind. In my opinion, that is even more important for Macedonia. However, Macedonia is also in need of great understanding and support from its neighbors. It is the only hope for a successful multiethnic state in the Balkans, although the democratic process of inter-ethnic accommodation will be difficult and will face many crises. But if we manage not to exhaust ourselves in animosity and hate, we will be able to turn to a brighter future.

In Macedonia, the Kosovo issue and its impact on the future status on inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia is a subject not seriously debated! New Balkan Politics is opening a competent and sincere debate of different views.

\* \* \*